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Text of President's Speech on Drive Against Crime

WASHINGTON, Oct. 14 (AP) — Following is the prepared text of President Reagan's speech today at the Department of Justice.

I am delighted to be here but I want to say at the outset that I did not come today just to give a pep talk or exchange niceties. Those of you engaged in law enforcement have struggled long and hard in what must have often seemed like a losing war against the menace of crime. I am grateful to you for that and so are the American people. But besides being grateful, I have some good news for you: a major initiative that I believe can mark a turning point in the battle against crime.

As all of you know, crime today is an American epidemic. It takes the lives of over 20,000 Americans a year, it touches nearly a third of American homes and results in about \$8 billion a year in financial losses.

These statistics suggest that our criminal justice system has broken down, that it just isn't working. And many Americans are losing faith in it. Nine out of ten Americans believe that long courts in their homes are not as tough enough on criminals.

And the cold statistics do demonstrate the failure of our criminal justice system to adequately pursue, prosecute and punish criminals. In New York City, for example, less than 1 percent of reported felons end up in a prison term for the offender.

'A New Privileged Class'

The perception is growing that the crime problem stems from the emergence of a new privileged class in America: A class of repeat offenders and career criminals who think they have a right to victimize their fellow citizens with virtual impunity. They are openly contemptuous of our way of justice; they do not believe they will be caught, and if they are caught, they are confident that once their cases enter our legal system the charges will be dropped, postponed, plea-bargained away or lost in a maze of legal technicalities that make a mockery of our legitimate and honorable concern with civil liberties.

Once again, the research shows that this common perception has a strong basis in fact. Just take one limited part of the crime picture: transit crime in New York City. Estimates show that only 200 habitual offenders were responsible for nearly half of the crimes committed in their subway last year.

This rise in crime, this growth of a hardened criminal class, has partly been the result of misplaced Government priorities and a misguided social philosophy. At the root of this philosophy lies the utopian presumption about human nature that sees man as primarily a creature of his material environment. By changing this environment through expensive social programs this philosophy holds that Government can permanently change man and usher in an era of peace and virtue. In much the same way, individual wrongdoing is seen as a result of poor socio-economic conditions or an underprivileged background. This philosophy suggests, in short, that where there is crime there is doing, society, not the individual, is to blame.

'Consensus Rejects This View'

But what has also become abundantly clear in the last few years is that a new political consensus among the American people utterly rejects this point of view. The increase in citizen involvement in the crime problem and the tough new state statutes directed at repeat offenders make it clear that the American people are reasserting certain enduring truths: The belief that right and wrong do matter, that individuals are responsible for their actions, that evil is frequently a conscious choice and that retribution must be swift and sure for those who decide to make a career of preying on the innocent.

When the Administration, even as we were struggling with our economic and international problems, has also been attempting to deal with the

threat of crime and to speak for this new consensus. As you know, one of the most critical duties that we faced upon taking office was controlling the influx of illegal drugs into this country. The south Florida task force, which we established as the leadership of Vice President George Bush, has, in the opinion of virtually all knowledgeable observers, been highly successful in slowing the flow of illegal drugs into the United States.

'Increasing Sophistication'

I will return to the subject of illegal drug trade in a moment, but let me say now that what was happening in south Florida is an example of the increasing sophistication and power of organized criminal enterprises and the grave danger they pose to our nation. When I spoke in New Orleans last year to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, I made a point then that I think bears repeating now. Organized crime draws distinctions between violent crime and sophisticated crime or between crimes like drug-pushing and crimes like bribery. In this, crime does not come in categories, it is part of a pattern. If one sector prospers in the community of crime, so ultimately do the others.

As I said then, the street criminal, the drug pusher, the mobster, the corrupt policeman or public official, they form their own criminal subculture, they contribute to and they prosper in a culture of lawlessness. They need each other, they use each other, they protect each other. And that brings us to the major and sweeping effort I am announcing this morning. For many years, we have tolerated in America — not just in the illegal and highly dangerous drug traffic but in many other areas — a syndicate of organized criminals whose power is now reaching a truly staggering height. The personal suffering, the cost to our society in human and fiscal terms, the climate of lawlessness that its existence fosters has made this network of professional criminals a core of our national crisis.

'Every Segment of Our Society'

Today the power of organized crime reaches into every segment of our society. It is estimated that the syndicate has millions of dollars of assets in legitimate businesses; it controls corrupt union locals; it runs burglary and drug rings; it holds a virtual monopoly on the heroin trade; it thrives on illegal gambling, pornography, gun-running, car theft, arson and a host of other illegal activities. The existence of this nationwide criminal network and its willingness and too often its success — in corrupting and gaining protection from those in high places is an affront to every law-abiding American and an encouragement to every street punk or two-bit criminal who hopes someday to make it to the big time.

The reasons for the mob's success are clear. Its tactics and techniques are well known. Organization and discipline, vows of secrecy and loyalty, insulation of its leaders from direct criminal involvement, bribery and corruption of law-enforcement and public officials, violence and threats against those who would testify or resist this criminal conspiracy all have contributed to the protective curtain of silence that surrounds its activities.

Smith Put Together Plans

Through the years, a few dedicated Americans have broken the curtain surrounding this menace and successfully rooted it out. Their names are familiar: Prosecutor Thomas Dewey and Judge William Seabury, Federal agent Eliot Ness, Senators Kefauver and McClellan, Attorney General Brownell and Kennedy, Investigator Robert Dolles. Important and increasingly effective investigations and prosecutions have also been achieved by the F.B.I. and the Justice Department strike forces. But too often the efforts against the mob made by a few dedicated policemen, prosecutors, reporters or public officials have resulted in only temporary

gains. The time has come to make these gains permanent. The time has come to cripple the power of the mob in America.

A few months ago, Attorney General William French Smith and his staff in collaboration with the Treasury Department put together final plans for a national strategy to expose, prosecute and ultimately cripple organized crime in America.

I want to announce this program today. It is one that outlines a national strategy that I believe will bring us very close to removing a stain from American history that has lasted nearly a hundred years. The program is very detailed but let me now outline a few of its major facets.

First, in view of the success of the south Florida task force, and because of increasing organized crime involvement in drug abuse, we will establish 12 additional task forces in key areas in the United States. These task forces, under the direction of the Attorney General, will work closely with state and local law enforcement officials. Following the south Florida example, these task forces will include the F.B.I., D.E.A., I.T.S., A.T.F., Immigration and Naturalization Service, Customs Service, the United States Coast Guard. In addition, in some regions the Department of Defense tracking and pursuit capability will be made available. I believe that these task forces will allow us to mount an intensive and coordinated campaign against international and domestic drug trafficking and other organized criminal enterprises.

Committee to Be Created

Second, no weapon against organized crime has proved more effective or more important to law enforcement than the investigations carried on by the Kefauver Committee and the McClellan Committee in the 1950's or the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations which, as many of you may remember, heard testimony from Federal informant Joseph Valachi in the 1960's. Although several other commissions on crime have been appointed since then, none has had the time and the resources to fully investigate the syndicate and lay out a national strategy for its elimination.

Accordingly, I am announcing the creation of a panel of 15 distinguished Americans from diverse backgrounds and professions with practical experience in criminal justice and combating organized crime. The purpose of this commission, which will last for three years, will be to undertake a long-range analysis of organized crime's influence, to analyze and debate the data it gathers, and to hold public hearings on the findings. Not only will the work of this commission lead to important legislative recommendations, it will also heighten public awareness and knowledge about the threat of organized crime and mobilize citizen support for its eradication.

Third, this Administration will launch a project, similar to the 50-states project now under way in the area of women's rights, that will enlist the nation's governors in bringing about needed criminal justice reforms. For example, without effective enforcement of local and state statutes against various kinds of racketeering like illegal gambling, this vital source of revenue for organized crime will never be fully dried up. This government project will attempt to bring to the attention of the states the importance of such initiatives as well as serving as a sounding board for the governors' concerns.

Leadership at Cabinet Level

Fourth, all the diverse agencies and law enforcement bureaus of the Federal Government will be brought together in a comprehensive attack on drug trafficking and organized crime under a Cabinet-level committee chaired by the Attorney General and a working group chaired by the Associate Attorney General. Their job will

be to review interagency and inter-governmental cooperation in the struggle against organized crime and, when necessary, bring problems in these areas to my attention.

Fifth, we are establishing, through the Department of Justice and Treasury, a National Center for State and Local Law Enforcement Training at the Federal facility in Glynn, Ga. This center, which will complement the already excellent training programs run by the F.B.I. and D.E.A., will assist and train local law enforcement agents and officials in combating new kinds of syndicated crime dealing in drugs. This requirement, although simple and inexpensive, will establish a formal mechanism through which the Justice Department will take a yearly inventory of these efforts in this area and report to the American people on its progress.

Sixth, this Administration will open a new legislative offensive designed to win approval of reforms in criminal statutes dealing with bail, sentencing, criminal forfeiture, and exclusionary rule and labor racketeering that are essential in the fight against organized crime.

Seventh, I will ask that the Attorney General be required to submit a yearly report to the people through the President and the Congress on the status of the fight against organized crime and organized criminal groups dealing in drugs. This requirement, although simple and inexpensive, will establish a formal mechanism through which the Justice Department will take a yearly inventory of these efforts in this area and report to the American people on its progress.

Money for Prison Facilities

And, eighth, millions of dollars will be allocated for prison and jail facilities so that the mistake of releasing dangerous criminals because of overcrowded prisons will not be repeated. I believe this program will prove to be a highly effective attack on drug trafficking and the even larger problem of organized crime. In fact, its first year will probably cost less than the \$100 million spent in one day on illegal drugs in this country or what is spent in one week by many Federal programs. Repeat this much be clear: Our commitment to this program is unshakable; we intend to do what is necessary to end the drug menace and cripple organized crime. We live at a turning point, one of those critical eras in history when a nation and a citizenry unite with the sound instincts of good and decent people to make a crucial difference in the lives of future generations. We can and will make a difference.

This is the justification for the offensive on organized crime enterprises that I have outlined today. It comes down to the end to a simple question we must ask ourselves: What kind of people are we if we continue to tolerate in our midst an invisible, lawless empire? Can we honestly say that only will the land "with justice for all" if we do not now exert every effort to eliminate this confederation of professional criminals, this dark, evil enemy within? You know the answer to that question.

'Obligation to Protect Innocent'

The American people want the mob and its associates brought to justice and their power broken. Not out of a sense of vengeance but out of a sense of justice. Not just from an obligation to punish the guilty but from an ever stronger obligation to protect the innocent. Not simply for the sake of legalities, but for the sake of the law that is the protection of liberty.

In justice," James Madison wrote in the Federalist Papers, "is the end of government. It is the end of civil society. It ever has been and ever will be pursued until it be obtained, or until liberty be lost in the pursuit."

For the sake of our children, for the sake of all the magnificent accomplishments of the American past, today I ask for your support and the support of our people in this effort to fight the drug menace, to eradicate the cancers of organized crime and public corruption, to make our streets and houses safe again and to return America to the days of respect for the law and for the rights of the innocent.

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